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LETTER DATED 23 MARCH 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the text of the letter dated 19 March 1998 addressed to Mr. Ismael Cem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, by Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Greece, containing the reply of the Government of Greece to the proposals made by the Turkish Government on 11 March 1998 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christos ZACHARAKIS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



ANNEX

Letter dated 19 March 1998 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of
Greece addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey

In my letter of 20 February, I transmitted to you the response of the Greek Government to the ideas you had conveyed through our Ambassador in Ankara on 12 February 1998.

I regret very much to see that the proposals contained therein were met with a very negative reception, and that the approach suggested there for dealing with outstanding issues was rejected.

I regret most of all that, both in your letter and in the attendant note verbale, your response fails to acknowledge the possibility of addressing the issues in our relations through legal means and international judicial instruments within the framework of international law and treaties.

For our part, we shall remain committed to the effort of channelling our relations through the principles of international law and accepted international practice, and our invitation to Turkey to join us in this effort shall remain valid. In this context, the undeniable fact that Greece has accepted, in very broad and comprehensive terms, the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice indicates the way we will continue to encourage Turkey to do the same and thus have the opportunity to test the validity of various challenges it has seen fit to raise in the Court.

Moreover, I stress that our proposal for a step-by-step approach to resolve issues in a realistic sequence and thus gradually ameliorate relations in a sustained manner with a perspective, remains on the table.

In this context, the invitation to proceed with the delimitation of the continental shelf by referral to the International Court of Justice also remains standing. This remains objectively the only real problem that our two countries have to clear up between them. The importance of such a step in the overall range of our relations has been demonstrated at great length in the past.

However, I have to reiterate that there is no interest in trying to legitimize the subjective situation that Turkey has been trying to create through an open-ended series of claims. The Greek Government has made clear that a political negotiation over those claims, in the form of "comprehensive dialogue", which has been the constant objective of Turkish policy, is not acceptable.

As far as the Madrid joint statement is concerned, it has still not been made clear what kind of formalization the Turkish Government has in mind. The Greek Government considers it important to uphold the spirit as well as the letter of the political statement we have made along the lines I have described in my previous letter. In this context, I would like to mention that a number of official statements issued by the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

concerning our present exchange of views included references of a threatening tone which is not consistent with the Madrid undertaking.

I am very glad for your support for the efforts of the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to reduce tension by defining possible confidence-building measures and implementing the 1988 agreements. The process is in development in Brussels and we should not try to preempt it.

The validity of the "group of experts" exercise lies, for both countries, in its character as a European Union initiative. I would urge you to reconsider your position so that its usefulness can be tested.

For my part, I believe that contacts between Ministers at every given opportunity can be useful; I am convinced that exchanges of views on a basis of sincerity and goodwill might help to persuade the Turkish side that we need to proceed on the realistic and constructive approach we have been suggesting towards resolving outstanding issues within a framework of international law. We can thus ameliorate our relations in a way that will enhance security and stability in our area and bring Turkey closer to its European vocation.

I think that the opportunity offered by your eventual presence in Rhodes in May should not be missed.

I am looking forward to seeing you there.

(Signed) Theodoros PANGALOS
